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Romania

Poultry and Products

Avian Influenza in Romania

2005

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Report Highlights:

On October 13, laboratory tests confirmed Avian Influenza of the H5 type is present in Romania. Confirmation tests for pathogenicity are expected from a reference laboratory in the United Kingdom in a few days. On October 7, tests from a backyard flock of ducks and hens in Ceamurlia-de-Jos, Tulcea County, in the Danube Delta region tested positive for influenza. The Romanian Government fears that subsequent testing will reveal that it is H5N1, the type causing severe human mortality in Asia.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Sofia [BU1]
[RO]

Suspicion of AI virus

On October 7, 2005, an outbreak of suspicion of avian influenza was reported in a backyard flock of 53 chickens/hens and 47 ducks in Ceamurlia-de-Jos, Tulcea County, in the eastern part of the country. In this flock, 40 ducks and 1 chicken died, while the other poultry had no clinical signs of disease. The samples were taken from 3 ducks and 2 chickens and transported to the Institute for Diagnosis and Animal Health in Bucharest; blood samples from one duck and from one chicken tested positive.

The Danube delta, where Ceamurlia de Jos is located, contains Europe's largest wetlands and is a major migratory area for wild birds coming from Russia, Scandinavia, Poland and Germany. The birds mainly move to warmer areas in North Africa including the Nile delta for winter.

As soon as the samples tested positive, the Romanian veterinary authorities took strong measures to prevent the disease from spreading, such as culling, disinfecting, and establishing a quarantine zone. The Romanian Veterinary estimated that about 45,000 birds would be culled during this operation. Hunting was also banned in the Danube Delta. The Ministry of Health started vaccination against human flu on all population living in the community of Ceamurlia-de-Jos.

On October 12, 2005, the Romanian veterinary could still not isolate the virus. Based on this information, EC reported that Avian Influenza has not been reported in Romania and no import restrictions had been taken.

AI virus has been confirmed

On October 13, 2005, the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture announced that further tests confirmed that AI virus of H5 type has been isolated. In order to detect its pathogenicity, in the afternoon of October 13, the virus extract has been sent for further research and identification to the EU Reference Laboratory in Weybridge, Great Britain. According to the Romanian Institute for Diagnosis and Animal Health it is likely that the AI virus is of H5N1 strain. Confirmation tests for the virus pathogenicity are expected from Weybridge in a couple of days.

Within the quarantine zone, all birds are to be culled. The authorities have also extended the area under permanent veterinary surveillance to a radius of 10 kilometers. This means that all birds in this area are counted, more samples are collected, and all movement of animals is prohibited. The area under veterinary surveillance includes 8 other villages. Severe measures have been imposed at the border as well. All trucks and cars entering Romania are disinfected.

Ministry of Health has taken the measure to vaccinate the human population with high risk to infection, especially for poultry breeders, elderly, and children.

On October 13, 2005, the first birds' owners who recorded losses during the culling procedure have received compensations from the Romanian Government. Shipments of food have also been supplied to the quarantine zone. The compensation process will continue for the rest of households in the respective locality. The budgetary efforts for compensations are estimated to about \$270,000 (about 10 bln. ROL).

As of October 14, about 6,500 birds have been culled, of which about 5,300 chickens, 530 ducks, 300 geese and 350 turkeys, which belong to 111 households in Ceamurlia-de-Jos.

Economic Impact on Domestic Poultry producers and Trade

Following the announcement on the suspicion Avian Influenza, the sales volume of poultry meat immediately decreased to 60% of regular sales. Although Government authorities and the Poultry Producers Association publicly emphasized that proper poultry cooking prevent infection and poultry meat supplied by veterinary certified establishments and shops is safe, only little improvement was observed. At national level, restrictions on poultry genetic material movement were also imposed, affecting more the domestic producers.

Import restrictions

As a result of AI confirmation in Romania, starting with October 14, the EU Commission banned the imports of live birds, meat and poultry products from Romania. However, this measure will have only a small effect on the market compared to the domestic sales reduction, as Romanian poultry meat exports to EU are valued at about 4,000 MT (1.6% of the domestic poultry production) worth of \$15 million. Poultry meat preparations under heat treatment will still be allowed for export.

This measure comes in addition to similar measure taken by other countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Hetzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Greece, and Kosovo.

FAS Bucharest has maintained close contact with the Romanian Veterinary Authority and has received specific requests for equipment and supplies. The Agency for International Development (AID) has pledged support through the current technical assistance program with USDA.